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SUBJECT: ANDHRA PRADESH CONVICTS HUMAN TRAFFICKERS, SCORES OTHER
TIP SUCCESSES

¶1. Summary: The state of Andhra Pradesh (one of India's largest, with a population exceeding 80 million) continues to be one of India's most active states in combating trafficking in persons (TIP), as highlighted by a recent series of arrests, convictions, and lengthy prison sentences handed out to perpetrators. Police training and sensitization projects, particularly those sponsored by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), are having a demonstrably positive effect, and we continue to encourage this type of constructive partnership with the GoI. End Summary.

AP successfully prosecutes traffickers

¶2. A court in Andhra Pradesh's (AP) Guntur district (230 km southeast of Hyderabad) convicted on April 1 seven women and three men for human trafficking, sentencing them each to seven years in prison and fining them USD 20. The ten were originally booked in ¶2007. This relatively speedy (by Indian standards), successful prosecution is a notable achievement by state law enforcement and judiciary officials. Some trafficking victims were housed and protected at an NGO-operated shelter over the past several months to facilitate their ability to provide testimony for the trial. Our NGO contacts told us that a "Victim Witness Protection Support" program (introduced and initially funded by UNODC) played a key role in supporting this trial and its outcome.

Police rescue forced-prostitution victims

¶3. Police in the same district raided a brothel on January 30, rescuing nine young women being held against their will. The police sent the women, ranging in age from 19 to 22, to a local shelter run by an NGO, the Society for Health, Entire Lower and Rural People (HELP). HELP immediately began providing counseling and other services to the women. Police from Guntur District's Pattabhipuram Police Station arrested nine people (and are still searching for another) in conjunction with this case, booking the accused under Indian Penal Code 372, 373, 292 and Immoral Trafficking and (Prohibition) Act Sections 3,4,5 and 7.

AP scores unprecedented success in prosecutions

¶4. S. Umapati, AP's Crime Investigation Department (CID) Inspector General who heads the state's anti-trafficking wing, told us that AP's courts have ordered sentences related to 13 different cases in the past 16 months, sending 55 convicted traffickers to jail from 4 to 14 years. Umapati stressed that this was the largest number of trafficking convictions ever in AP in a single year. Umapati also told us that the conviction rate had increased precisely because of the increased attention and resources the police had given to the issue. He also noted that the AP government is institutionalizing a proper victim protection program.

¶15. Our NGO contacts agree that increased police attention to the trafficking issue is responsible for the large number of convictions over a short period. They also tell us that other factors were important, including a pro-active judiciary, law enforcement officials who are better sensitized to the issue, and protection and support programs for victims and other witnesses. UNODC has provided multiple training programs that continue to strengthen these factors, including programs for judges that have helped speed up trials. In addition, local NGOs tell us that the introduction and acceptance of the "nodal NGO" concept and the "Victim Witness Protection" program have contributed to the increase in convictions.

(A "nodal NGO," like HELP, works closely with government agencies, providing a central link -- hence the term "nodal" -- among victims, government, and organizations providing support services like shelter, counseling, and security. These organizations are recognized by the government, and are responsible for providing or coordinating these support services for victims. These services, among other things, allow victims to serve as more effective witnesses in trials against traffickers.)

A positive trajectory

¶16. COMMENT: While there is still room for improvement in combating TIP in Andhra Pradesh, it is clear that the attention its government has focused on the issue is producing results. Training and sensitization programs, like those offered by UNODC, have had positive, quantifiable effects, and we continue to encourage this type of pro-active, constructive engagement with GoI officials.

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